# internal bulletin

CROSS-COUNTRY REPORTS ON THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

MARCH 1970

25¢

# MONTREAL WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT REPORT

The Women's Liberation movement in Montreal is at a very early stage of development, earlier than most other groups in English Canada and the United States. Although organized groups (French and English) have existed for about 6 months, very little progress has been made towards concrete action by the groups.

The English liberation group has, though, been functioning in a much more consistent manner than the French one. Marlene Dixon, has, since the Fall, been giving a weekly, free credit class at McGill University on women's oppression, its social and political origins. In addition, within the last couple of months "consciousness raising" groups of about 10 women each have been meeting weekly, mainly to discuss personal problems and (hopefully) to draw generalizations from these discussions. The main meetings have been held bi-weekly.

Virtually all political tendencies are in the group, although, at this time none is really dominant. The most vocal women, however, are those who have had some experience in the New Left, and as a result, the English women's liberation group has no formal structure, no steering committee, no elected leadership. This policy is a conscious one, raised mainly by those women with a New Left background, but, up to now, seemingly accepted by a majority of the women involved. The consequences of this lack of organization, of course, are obvious. There is very little real participation by most of those who regularly attend meetings and a very serious problem exists in planning, or even getting the women to accept, concrete actions. The bi-weekly meetings, almost without exception, are wasted on discussion of what functions those meetings should have. The concept of using the meeting to plan concrete action (supported by about half of those at these meetings) is artificially opposed to that of using the meetings as a discussion and/or educational arena.

In a sense, the whole concept of what a Women's Liberation movement is, and should be, is debated. Many of the women who have had experiences in the New Left (most of them bad experiences) believe that the Women's Liberation movement should be a revolutionary movement of women. Implicit in this concept is the exclusion of women who are not revolutionaries and/or socialists from the movement and, also, an unwillingness to take part in any action for Women's Liberation which could be defined as a civil rights issue, and therefore, liable to be co-opted by the capitalist system. This concept also leads to a tendency to view the Women's Liberation movement as a multi-issue movement, taking actions on issues which are general social issues, with no direct link to the liberation of women. The Women's Liberation groups' participation in the abortive all-women demonstration against the Montreal By-Law banning demonstrations - an action which demoralized a good number of women and which decimated the French group -- flowed naturally from this concept of a revolutionary women's movement. This tendency, though, constitutes a small minority of those involved in the English group.

The French group, Front de Liberation de la Femme (F.L.F.) had a healthy, action-oriented beginning. Much of its nucleus came from the ranks of the C.N.T.U. (Confederation of National Trade Unions) along with a few women from the F.L.P. (Front de Liberation Populaire). As our Comrades were not active in this group, we have only a vague idea of the early activities of this group. We had the impression that they were meeting regularly, but discovered later that they had had only 2 or 3 meetings up to the time of the above-mentioned demonstration. That demonstration, because it had nothing to do with women's liberation, and because it was obviously an attempt by the Michel Chartrand faction in the C.N.T.U. to substitute an action by women for a mass action against the by-law, was a serious defeat to the F.L.F., and succeeded in dissolving it for a while. At the beginning of February, the F.L.F., or more specifically about 8 women, began an attempt to revive the F.L.F. The group is, as before, action-oriented, but has a tendency to want action for the sake of action, without seriously determining

the validity of any action undertaken. Here, as in the English group, the same tendency, which might be characterized as "Mao-Spontaneist" exists. There is also an unwillingness to broaden the base of the group, and a tendency to want it to remain small. The women in the F.L.F. do, however, see a need for a leadership in the movement, which differentiates them from their English counterparts.

Our women Comrades in Montreal have only recently intervened in the Women's Liberation movement in a consistent way, and primarily in the English group, though we are beginning to intervene in the F.L.F. We have advanced our conception of the movement, although not consistently enough. Several Comrades have pressed for some kind of action - on a strictly women's liberation issue - as necessary to reach more women, gain publicity, and make the Women's Liberation movement a viable one. The English group has taken action twice in the first two weeks of February. Once against an offensive revue at McGill, and the other, initiated by our Movement, against the beauty contest for the Queen of the Sir George Williams University Winter Carnival. We wrote a leaflet for the latter action which gained considerable publicity.

We have decided, as there is no hostility to us in the movement, as we see the above-described tendency developing, it is time for us to put forward more strongly our concept of a Women's Liberation movement - an all-inclusive, single issue movement which takes action on issues affecting women - all women - as well as educating the women actively involved about the roots of their oppression, and the way to overcome that oppression.

---

## KITCHENER-WATERLOO-GUELPH WOMEN'S LIBERATION REPORT

Last June, the first attempts at a Women's Liberation group was made at the University of Waterloo. The group was formed by women in the now-defunct Radical Student Movement at the Univ. of Waterloo, their initial motivation being "men are not giving us our freedom". However, during the summer, as three of our Comrades came to the meetings, the group took a new tact, and started to see the necessity for an analysis of the entire society. For about 3 months the group no longer met regularly, but in early January they revived with a showing of Salt of the Earth and a discussion. They have held a couple of seminar mornings since then. However, at the Univ. of Waterloo there are basically two groups with a third centred around Univ. of Waterloo's Integrated Studies Program. They differ mainly in tactics over the role of men. In general the members are not hostile to the Y.S.'ers and, as was demonstrated during the protest of the Miss Canada University Pageant, we were able to work well with the groups. Our obvious task here would be to consolidate the groups, mainly through actions.

At the University of Guelph, towards the end of the summer, 1969, and the advent of Guelph Student Movement, attempts were made to form a Women's Liberation group. Our Comrades played and are continuing to play an active and leading role in this group. Again, it too disintegrated until shortly before the Pageant protest. Since then it has planned to have a three-day seminar, and they obtained the funds for this ($470) from one of the college councils (Witan). The core group at Univ. of Guelph is very militant and are anxious to enter into actions.

At Waterloo Lutheran University, the Y.S. sponsored a meeting with Colleen Lewis in late November. From that a group was formally founded in early January, and within two weeks this group was involved in organizing the Pageant protest. The mem-

KITCHENER-WATERLOO-GUELPH REPORT (cont'd)

bers of this group (unlike the core group at Univ. of Guelph and Univ. of Waterloo) generally consider themselves non-political and non-active in most other ways. Since the protest at the Pageant, the group has decided to hold a one-day Teach-In in the second week of March.

The biggest breakthrough for Women's Liberation, not just for Kitchener-Waterloo-Guelph, but for all of southern Ontario was the Pageant protest at Waterloo Lutheran on January 30th. For this area it was the culmination of a full week of Women's Liberation activity. Using the presence of Janiel Jolley, the protest candidate from Simon Fraser University, who had been disqualified, the Women's Liberation groups held many open forums, did mass leafletting, and held "appeal" actions such as guerrilla theatre throughout the week. On the night of the protest, nearly 200 people came from Western, Univ. of Toronto, York, McMaster, Univ. of Guelph, Univ. of Waterloo and Waterloo Lutheran U.

The fact that an action organized in less than a week received such a high response obviously indicates that Women's Liberation is ready for and anxious to demonstrate itself in action. Most groups have been through a long period of "talk" and are now ready to make their demands heard through action. Opportunities for our Comrades are opening up at a rapid pace in this work. In our area, our Comrades have been in the leadership and are doing some fine work when working with women from other political tendencies. Yet, as we enter mass actions we must be even more conscious of the necessity to operate as a well-disciplined, organized, and <u>leading</u> tendency within the Women's Liberation Movement, operating in a way similar to our approach to Anti-War work.

Lastly, in terms of work with women outside of the university milieu, little has been done in Kitchener-Waterloo-Guelph. We do have some contacts, and hopefully, through our worker Comrades, can establish a Women's Liberation group within the community.

The Women's Liberation Movement is one of our most important areas of work now. Mass actions will become more and more a centre of Women's Liberation work. Again, our Comrades must be ready to act as a well-organized group within the movement. Success here will bring us closer to the coming Canadian revolution.

---

# TORONTO WOMEN'S LIBERATION GROUP REPORT

There are at present three Women' Liberation groups in Toronto, each of which tends to appeal to a different constituency. We are active in all three groups and have the perspective of building links between them through joint actions, etc.

THE NEW FEMINISTS - This group split from the Womens Liberation Movement about 1 year ago because they felt the Womens Liberation Movement defined itself too rigidly in Marxist terms. In this year they have acquired a large list of supporters (mailing list of about 200); carried a couple of successful actions (including the Greenacres action reported in the Vanguard) spoken to thousands of women across southern Ontario; launched a monthly paper (3 issues have appeared); and acquired a headquarters. The headquarters provides a centre for women to meet and discuss and forces the movement into a more professional operation. This dynamic record tends to hide the many problems before the group. Although the group has defined its aim - the elimination of sex roles, it has not yet come to grips with its organizational character or structure. Sharp divisions exist within the group as to whether they want to build a small cadre movement, a mass movement or something in between. There is also a bitter distrust, among certain members, of all political groups, and a belief that the struggle for women's liberation is not related to any other struggle, and that women in the Feminist Movement must promote their struggle to the exclusion of participation in any other social or political movement.

This issue has been shelved by closing the voting membership at 16 women (additional women can only join by the unanimous vote of these 16!) and by allowing other women to join only as non-voting members. Business meetings of the group have been taken up for the past year in discussions on structure and on a manifesto.

Our participation has been somewhat minimal and haphazard. We are now moving more comrades in to participate in a more regular basis with the aim of opening the movement up. We are taking the initiative in organizing regular discussion groups at the headquarters on current, controversial or basic issues around women's liberation, which will make the group more interesting and relevant and bring women around on a regular basis. We are going to pick up speaking engagements for the group and write for the paper. We have met several excellent contacts through the group, and visualize that, if we succeed in opening it up, it will become an increasingly important area of work for us.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT - This group, the original one in the Toronto area, has a mailing list of about 150 and attracts between 30 and 60 women to its meetings. Although it operates a birth control centre and is working on the Abortion Caravan, the group tends to be a talk shop, with meetings often degenerating into "struggle sessions" about what is wrong with the group. It continues to be dominated by a rather sectarian but loose New Left leadership. Despite these problems it continues to attract new women. The campus sub-group at U. of T. tends to be more viable, and our Comrades along with a C.P. woman are able to provide considerable leadership. The Waterloo action (report attached) was carried mainly through the campus group with our Comrades providing the main organization and co-ordination.

We have recently taken steps to become more involved in the group - to man literature tables, to intervene in as many meetings as we can. We want our Comrades to become increasingly known and established as leaders within the group. We are pushing for the group to adopt a more serious professional attitude - establish a central address, advertise meetings, etc. and to hold some good actions.

Women's Liberation Movement (cont'd)

A Women's Liberation group has been set up at York Univ. We don't have any women Comrades on this campus at present but are doing what we can to make up for this by sending women Comrades to York Women's Liberation meetings when possible and by selling Women's Liberation literature at our tables. We are now in the process of recruiting our first woman comrade at York!

THE NDP WOMEN'S LIBERATION CAUCUS - which was set up in Toronto in December, was in many ways a product of the Winnipeg Convention. At present the group is made up primarily of women from the Waffle Caucus, including, of course, ourselves. There is a tendency among some Waffle women to want to make the group an adjunct of the Waffle caucus. However this position has not carried, and the perspective is to reach out to all women within the NDP and to use the resources of the Party where possible (e.g., meetings are usually held at the NDP headquarters). The group has defined itself as follows:

"Structure of the Group - must be members of NDP to vote on policies adopted by the group. We are willing to work with other women's groups on any actions taken up. Essentially we are an action-oriented group.

AIMS

1. To work for the liberation of women in Canadian society
   - to alter the consciousness of man and women in relation to the role women are forced to play in society.

2. To take as our primary constituency the NDP
   - to get resolutions essential to women passed at Conventions.

3. To take as our basic concern the situation of working class and poor women
   - to encourage housewives to take part in actions taken up, and also try to get these women involved in discussions initiated at meetings.

4. To develop women as political persons
   - this group will support women in developing all their skills to organize and act effectively politically.

5. Socialist orientated - as socialist women seeking to change present values as a group we must have the courage to discover new ways of action, of communication, of expression, of accomplishment so that human people may emerge in a truly human society."

The group is working on a series of papers on such topics as women in the work force, abortion, day care centres, education, etc., which will be made up into a kit to be used at meetings and as a basis for drawing up a program for the ONDP Convention in the fall. The group is action-oriented and is already sending speakers to Riding Associations. It also plans to intervene firmly in a conference entitled "Women:Scene '70" which the Tory Provincial Government is holding on the question of women as consumers in March.

## WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

At the February 21st VMC Conference, a work shop was held on women's liberation. The discussion centred on ways of winning women's liberation activists to an understanding of the crucial importance of the Vietnam issue and of the need to become involved in the Anti-war movement. The work shop made several recommendations - that there be a Women's Liberation contingent in the march; that the VMC send out a letter to all women's groups appealing to them to join the march; that there be an article in the next CVN on women's liberation and the Anti-war movement (perhaps investigating how Vietnam-induced inflation hits at the woman worker and the housewife); that the VMC consider the possibility of providing day care facilities for children for the evening part of the Ottawa action.

## OUR EXTERNAL WORK

In Toronto we are identifying ourselves as the only political movement that promotes the issue of women's liberation. We are doing this through the Municipal election campaign, through our open intervention in the various women's liberation movements, and through the classes we have held on this question. In March we plan to hold a dramatic evening on women's liberation at our headquarters (to celebrate International Women's Day) and to have a forum on Rosa Luxemburg to commemorate the Centenary of her birth. The Young Socialists are currently running Joan Campana for President of SAC (Univ. of Toronto) and are developing women's liberation as a key plank in the platform. Colleen Levis was the featured speaker at Young Socialists public meetings on women's liberation at York Univ. and Univ. of Toronto. Both meetings were resoundingly successful, drawing out 250 and 75 people respectively. We are currently trying to produce more material for the Labor Challenge on this struggle, and to circulate our literature on this question more vigorously.

## INTERNAL WORK

We are trying to hold meetings of the Women's Liberation Committee on a regular bi-weekly basis and Fraction meetings on a monthly basis. The Committee has the function of directing our work both internally and externally.

---

## HAMILTON WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT REPORT

The group here was initiated by Comrades last fall after I had finished my tour for the YS/LJS. There were a few women who came to hear my talk at McMaster and some from the New Left McMaster Student Movement as well as several completely new people. The group had a few meetings, but because of particularly the opposition of the McMaster Student Movement women to the formation of the group (i.e., all but one) and the fact that at the time we had only one woman Comrade in the Local, the group did not develop into a concrete group with an executive, constitution and the beginnings of a program until January. The group is composed primarily of students, but it also has several older women who work and attend night school, a couple of housewives and some university workers. We participated in the Waterloo demonstration against the beauty contest and have held several educational events including a film showing. We now have several contacts for our Movement in the group and the group as a whole accepts our leadership, by default more than the result of a political struggle. The New Left and Maoist-influenced women of the McMaster Student Movement have abstained almost totally from the activities and meetings until this week (wk, of Feb. 21st) when after a discussion on "male chauvinism" at their last business meeting, they decided to send people in order to "bring them out of the Women's Liberation Movement group and into the McMaster Student Movement". However, they were not content to send only the McM.Sdt.Move. women. Several of the leading McM.Sdt.Move. men attended the last business meeting of the Women's Liberation Movement. The policy towards men attending meetings was not clearly established because of the reluctance of not only the McM.Sdt.Move. women at the beginning, but also because of an uncertainty on the part of several less political women. The policy was established that we would have men at meetings only by consent of the women at any particular meeting. However, since then the McMaster Student Union rejected our constitution because it contained the clause on membership which left the group open only to women. The McM.Sdt.Move., believe it or not, used this formal technicality to justify having men at the meeting. A further problem was that the majority of the steering committee of the group was not present and the one McM.Sdt.Move. woman who supports the existence of the group was not there. This left Comrades and entirely new people to cope with the boors of the McM.Sdt.Move. The men did most of the talking, proceeding to attack everything we suggested the group do. They carried entirely the C.P.L. line on movements like Women's and Blacks' liberation, although none of them were actually members of C.P.L. We are misleading people, they say, by carrying on campaigns against the government policy on abortions, because the Canadian government does not have the power to change the laws. When I tried to ignore them and finish the business, which was to organize our next action -- a teach-in on women, they accused me of railroading discussion, although the people worth talking to there were getting restless with the discussion they did not understand and were about to leave. We salvaged what we could from the meeting, but will face more such problems in the future. The major problem in getting the group off the ground seems to be the problem of getting people who can take leadership and initiative involved. The group is still loosely knit and without a cohesive program. Most are not political but are certainly moving in that direction. Those who support charity-type-setting-up of clinics themselves are not, at this time, involved in the group. We feel that more co-ordinated actions across Ontario and across Canada are essential to get groups like ours off the ground, and out of the talk-shop into action. The proximity of the Toronto groups has helped to speed up the interest here and the New Feminists Centre, in particular, will be helpful. We have actually done quite well in using the student press to put forward Women's Liberation ideas and the position of our Movement on it. In the second last issue of the Silhouette, the article I wrote for YSF in the January issue was reprinted in full.

Colleen Levis

REPORT ON WOMEN'S LIBERATION WORK IN VANCOUVER

The 5 member YS-LSA Women's Liberation Committee this fall decided to assign one comrade to the Vancouver Women's Caucus (VWC) for the general purpose of doing contact work for our movement, selling our literature, intervening where possible, and reporting its general activities to the local and branch. In January of this year, in view of the growth of the women's liberation movement in this city and across the continent, we decided to put more forces into the area to work in VWC, the NDP, to take responsibility for developing the branch and local in this political field, and where feasible, to undertake activities in the name of the YS and the LSA. We now have the perspective of becoming more involved in the area, learning more about it, and becoming leaders in the area. The branch and local executives are presently discussing redistribution of personnel in order to increase our forces in this area.

THE VANCOUVER WOMEN'S CAUCUS

The VWC grew out of an SDU formation on SFU. Most of our women comrades who were involved in the caucus at that time were later part of the group that split, so that then we were left with no forces in that area. Since then, the caucus has moved off campus in order to orient to women more generally, and presently has a permanent office in the Labour Temple. Student women are working principally in the city group although from time to time there is some activity carried by them on SFU, UBC and VCC.

The leadership of the VWC is composed principally of our ex-comrades, (Jran, Dodie, Bev) and campus type radicals (Margaret Benston, Marcy Cohen). The core of the membership includes radical student types, and working women, some of them housewives. While the bulk of the membership would fall into the "youth" category, several of the women are middleaged. Some of the steady "core" appear to operate as independant radicals and a large number identify themselves with the Chinese revolution although to the best of my knowledge none are actually members of any organized Maoist tendency. Other political tendencies include ourselves and the IWW (insofar as they can be characterized as a tendency). A couple of young women are members of the NDP, but are not seen as representing it, and the caucus as a whole does not in any way orient towards the NDP. We are the only political tendency that identifies ourselves as such, sells our paper, etc. This is not to say that other tendencies subordinate political differences, but that the movement itself is in a very embryonic stage and political differences haven't come to the surface yet. There is still general agreement in regard to demands, day-to-day tactics etc because issues dealt with to date have usually been on a very basic anti-capitalist, pro-human rights level.

Because several of the leaders of VWC received their political training in the Trotskyist movement, a lot of routine organizational work is done quite smoothly and does not pose itself as being problematic as it often does in other groups across the country with less political experience to draw on. For example, mailing lists are passed around at meetings, routine mailings are done, the office is staffed quite regularly, actions are generally fairly well publicized, publicity from the media is well utilized, educational work is carried consistently, and actions are carried out seriously and consistently. A list of actions the caucus has and is carrying should give an indication of how active, and how serious the group is.

Some actions that have been carried in Nov. and Dec. of '69:

1. A picket outside the Engineer's Club and outside Manpower, both of which are guilty of blatant discrimination against women;

2. A brief presented to Manpower;

3. A brief presented to the Commission on Human Rights hearings, and a demonstration and leafletting outside;

4. A contingent in the Nov. 15 Vietnam demonstration where some of the women chanted ultraleftist slogans;

5. A demonstration against Manpower who advertized for casual Xmas help for the Post Office, women - $1.25, men - $1.50. Hiring according to sex rather than qualifications, and low wages in general were the focus of the protest.

Some actions presently being carried:

1. The Pedestal a 4-8 page paper is coming out monthly, single issues and subs are being sold consistently;

2. A general campaign to get abortion laws repealed. A clinic has been set up to do free pregnancy testing and abortion counselling "under the new law". Demonstrations are being planned for Valentine's Day, and a mass demonstration in Ottawa on Mother's Day. The latter will take the form of something like a car cavalcade across the country to protest the deaths through illegal abortion. A film showing and educational on the vacuum abortion technique (used in the Soviet Union) is to be set up for medical people in the city;

3. Withholding or requesting refund of tax money which would go to supporting Canada Manpower;

4. Weekly educationals;

5. TV programs, articles for campus newspapers;

6. A protest candidate from SFU in the Waterloo University beauty contest;

7. "Women's Liberation Now" stickers to stick on ads, magazine covers, etc., that degrade women;

8. "A working women's workshop" (research and educationals at the Community Educational and Research Centre - Englerite). Some proposed projects are union organizing, research on labour history, researching the pill;

9. A teach-in on International Women's Day to which all women's organizations in the city will be invited.

Whereas occasionally these actions have been ultraleft in some aspects (eg., the demonstration outside the Commission on Human Rights had a gun in it), on the whole, actions have been centered around important issues, have been carefully explained to the public, have sought to involve as many women as possible, and have encouraged male solidarity.

VWC is open to our intervention in the sense that when we have a proposal to make, it is seriously considered by most of the women present. Yet while the Rands leadership has not attempted to exclude us, they ignore us as much as possible, have refused to speak at our forums, etc.

The serious shortcomings of the VWC are its clique leadership; its tendency to project the caucus as a group centered around a Marxist analysis of society, rather than a group centered around a set of demands; its inability to integrate the many new women with no previous political experience who are continually being attracted to VWC, but who seldom return for a second experience.

THE NDP

We have several contacts in this area, and at present a couple of women comrades who have already done some work in this area. All indications are that the NDP provides a tremendous potential for women's liberation work. We plan to work in reactivating the provincial NDP women's committee, of course along political lines and with a program for women's liberation. Feb. 7, the NDP Women are holding a public seminar on the general topic of women. We will participate and encourage contacts in the VWC to do so as well. In March, there will be a meeting to organize around the Watkins Manifesto, and we will participate in the women's panel and workshop. We expect not only that the issue of women can go a long way toward radicalizing and activating women in the NDP, by helping them work out an analysis of society, etc., but that this development can in turn serve to force the VWC to take the NDP more seriously.

YS - LSA EXTERNAL ACTIONS

This month, we held a film showing of "Women on the March" (history of the suffragette movement) which only drew out about 20 people, most of them comrades. We had hoped to attract many more people and our failure to do so was probably largely due to an inadequate publicizing of the film showing. We also held a Friday night forum on the Revolutionary Dynamics of Women's Liberation. With only a regular mailing and a small scale distribution of leaflets on the campuses and VWC, about 60 people attended, many of them new to us, and very interested in the topic.

We are planning to reserve a weekend of the spring educational lineup for the topic of women, and are hoping to arrange speaking meetings for a prominent Trotskyist women (we've written to Colleen L. about this). We are also planning some dramatic event for the Friday forum closest to International Women's Day.

Some other possibilities open to us - writing an internal paper for VWC on contact work, on the need to unite around a program rather than around a particular political analysis; writing reviews of our literature for the Pedestal; submitting a paper on Women's Liberation and the Position of Children (by Joyce M. of the NDP) to VWC, hopefully to be reproduced there, and then possibly to be reprinted by the Vanguard.

YS-LSA INTERNAL ACTIVITIES

An internal on Women's Liberation is being given in the yough, by one of the newer women comrades. A social evening is being planned for women comrades and close contacts in order to give us an opportunity to discuss problems in the area such as, How can a woman in our society become an effective revolutionary? Also, we may adopt the practice of presenting educationals regularly at meetings of the YS-LSA Women's Liberation Committee.

---

# REPORT ON WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN EDMONTON

Women's Liberation groups have existed for about three yea s in Edmonton. Since none of us left here were here in 1967-68 very little is known about its form in that year. In the school year of 1968-69 a group was established mostly around the SDU women, in their words, "as a reaction against left-wing male chauvinism". It was scarcely to be heard of, very clique-ridden and had little or no orientation towards moving out and involving new forces around a program and series of campaigns. It was a campus-based group and its main claim to fame was a somewhat ultra-left campaign around the student's union elections in which the SDU women, presented quite a good statement on Women's Liberation followed by the demand to "Smash Capitalism". This type of outlook tended to discredit the group and also the concept of Women's Liberation among the broader layers of radicalizing women on the campus, and the group lay dormant throughout the summer.

It was formed again with the beginning of the 1969-70 school year with a somewhat different outlook in that it was a city group which included students, working women, housewives etc.

It was at this time that the YS and the LSA became directly involved in the group. It was again mostly under the influence of the SDU women and maintained a cliquish atmosphere. There was no program and no form to the group. Chairmen of meetings and elected spokesmen were considered "bureaucratic" and so from Sept. to Dec. the meetings consisted primarily of gossip sessions and soul-searching as to why the women present had come to Women's Liberation. At one point during the fall, position papers were to be drawn up by all the different groups involved in the Women's Liberation group in terms of working out some kind of pe spective, but the YS was the only group which in fact presented a paper. The few newly radicalizing independent women who appeared at the meetings were turned off by the atmosphere of cliquism and inactivity and rarely reappeared at another meeting.

The main direction of the SDU women was to decentralize the group into smaller interest groups and their political positions flip-flopped from wanting the group to be made up of strictly "revolutionary" women to a broad formation of all women concerned about Women's Liberation. There were attempts to take the group off into the dead-ends of illegal abortion information centers etc. but these directions were never carried through. This sort of activity such as independent day care centers run by the Women's Liberation group took the place of a concerted campaign against the government abortion laws or for government sponsored day care centers.

In fact the only real activities carried by the group were a couple of debates at fraternities on the question of Women's Liberation.

During this period we dropped our participation to simply a holding operation--sending one woman comrade to each meeting to keep informed on what perspectives the group might be taking up.

What might prove to be a turning point in the group came with Women's Week on campus which later became Women's Day due to a lack of student Union funds. It was decided to carry a film showing and panel on women, and since the YS has no women students on campus we were unable to be directly involved in the preparations except to have a woman comrade on the panel. Much to everyone's surprise about 400 people

participated in the session and this was followed up with an organizational meeting which brought out about 50 to 60 new women -- mostly campus but also a significant section of working women and housewives.

Since these developments took place barely a week ago it is hard to give a full evaluation of where this group will go, but a couple of things are already becoming clear. These new women are interested in smaller interest groups but at the same time obviously intent on maintaining a central organization. As well it is clear that they are not interested in the talk shop atmosphere or soul searching of the previous group. It has already been agreed that the next meeting of the group will adopt a program (the proposals being very similar to what we have been pushing all along in the group) and an executive of sorts, and begin right away on some concrete activity.

The response of the SDU women to the YS has become quite antagonistic and we are preparing ourselves for the possibility of a red-baiting campaign but the way things stand now the possibilities are high that we will be able to win our political position in the group and play a leadership role in it. February 2, 1970.

J. Hart.

---

## OTTAWA WOMEN'S LIBERATION REPORT

In discussing our women's liberation work, I will first outline briefly the history of women's liberation in Ottawa and then go into some specific problems and areas of our work.

History:

There are at present two women's liberation groups in Ottawa: the Ottawa Women's Liberation Group and a Carleton University group. Both groups were started entirely on our initiative -- we launched both groups last fall (Sept. 1969). That is not to say that we created women's liberation in Ottawa -- many women were already intensely interested (as witnessed by a tremendous response to our call for an initial meeting, and enthusiastic participation of many women since then). But the impetus for the formation of a group came from us.

Having no women comrades on campus, we have had very little influence on the Carleton group. This group is quite disorganized but going generally in a good direction. It is non-exclusionist and oriented primarily to holding an educational program on women's liberation on campus -- they have sponsored several speakers and shown the film "The Salt of the Earth". A member of the Carleton group recently edited a 4-page supplement in the campus newspaper on women's liberation. The group also supported and participated in our recent demonstration to protest the exclusion of women from the National Press Club.

The off-campus group is the one in which we have actively participated. For the first two months, our comrades were in the leadership of this group. Up to this time the other women in the group were politically inexperienced women--for most, this was their first organizational involvement.

In late November, women in the New Left Caucus and the Waffle caucus decided to move into the group (up to that time, they had been more or less boycotting it). At this time, we were trying to get the group to adopt a program which was basically non-exclusionist and mass-oriented. The new women came into the group opposing this program with one which called for the group to explicitly identify itself as a group of socialist women -- a very exclusionist approach. (They did not try to exclude us but got us out of the leadership by abolishing the executive.) We rallied a caucus of about 11 women around us to defend our program -- however these women did not withstand the faction fight and dropped away from the group altogether.

So the Waffle women took over the leadership (although there is no longer a formal executive). However, they also dropped the discussion of program and the group is essentially operating in the direction we proposed. Attendance at all meetings is open to anyone who wishes to attend and the group is working toward a more action-oriented direction to educate and attract more women to the women's liberation movement.

The group's activities at this point are mainly educational -- with internal educationals at every meeting (twice monthly). The group puts out a bimonthly newsletter in an attractive format; it is planned to appeal to broad layers of women. Sales of the first issue went well. One of our comrades is co-editor of the newsletter, so we are not entirely out of the leadership.

The group recently sponsored its first action -- the demonstration mentioned before. This was held outside the Press Club Ball on Feb. 20; about 100 people participated including several M.P.'s. About half of the demonstrators were men. The demonstration was quite a success and got front-page coverage in both Ottawa dailies, as well as two members of the group (one a comrade) on an hour-long phone-in show on the radio. It was a positive thing for the group to take the plunge and finally sponsor an action. However, there were some less than positive aspects to it; first of all, the group as a whole did not participate actively in building the action -- all the work was essentially done by two people (again, not surprisingly, one of these was a Trotskyist!). Also the action itself was a little disorganized. It had no focal point (e.g. speakers) and thus focussed on the people attending the ball. Cries of "Sell-out" were directed at the women being escorted to the ball, whereas the target of the action was the Press club itself and its discriminatory policy, not these women.

Specific Areas to Mention:

1. Being in the leadership - was actually a very difficult position for us. Being an elected leadership, we had to represent the group as well as ourselves, which made it a bit hard to operate. We did not understand sufficiently the tasks of being in the leadership -- e.g. we did not recognise the necessity of thoroughly educating the women in the group to understand the implications of the program we were presenting. They did not really understand the necessity of fighting for non-exclusionism or a broadly oriented group -- and they ended up dropping out of activity when we put them in the position of having to fight for it.

2. The Faction fight - was a bad thing in another way, as it posed us against the Waffle women. We want to work more closely with them -- they are our only regular contact with the Waffle group in Ottawa. In actuality, their position on women's liberation is very close to ours but they do not see our support as essential. We will have to start talking with them more on an informal basis after meetings, about the group, the NDP, the Waffle group, etc.

Much of their opposition to our program seems to have been rather unprincipled -- they wanted us out of the leadership and thus opposed what we were proposing. Once they had taken over the leadership they were quite comfortable operating within the

direction we had projected. (In fact, one of them even read out a report on the Western Area Women's Liberation conference last fall, by Jean Rands, in which she -- quite correctly -- criticized the very position they had been taking. Yet they did not appear at all embarrassed to read out this report).

3. Contact Work: This has been a weak area for us. In the fall we recruited three women who were in the group but had also been previous contacts. There are at present no new women which we can consider as contacts -- this is an area we have to do more work on: talking to some of them -- particularly new women who are sympathetic to our approach -- after meetings, inviting them for coffee, selling our press to them, etc. We have also done practically no selling in the group apart from some women's liberation pamphlets, and we have not pushed these as much as we might have.

4. The Newsletter: At one point we had an incipient fight on our hands over the direction of the newsletter -- some of the women wanted to orient it specifically to welfare women, with articles on buying food economically and recipes for cooking cheap cuts of meat. We won this quite easily, conceding that articles should be in language readable to all but directed towards all women. The other editor, an N.D.P.er, supports our direction for the newsletter.

Summary:

Our comrades initiated a women's liberation group in Ottawa which is now recognized as the force for women's liberation in the city. (The New Left and Waffle women, who originally stayed out of the group, were in fact forced to enter it if they were to work in women's liberation). We have played a leading role in the group since its formation, although we are no longer its sole leadership. Our influence in the group is actually now more realistic in proportion to our participation; we have succeeded in drawing the most advanced women in the city into the group and into the leadership.

The group has involved 80-100 women since it was launched, with about 15 women regularly participating.

The group has had some problems, particularly in working out its direction; however, these problems never completely engrossed the group or turned it into the kind of sick soul-searching discussion group which some groups have become. Such problems are essentially a reflection of the stage at which women's liberation is at as a movement, and probably must be worked through by any group. The Ottawa group has, throughout its existence, maintained a healthy vibrant character. It is carrying a good educational program, with participation in discussions being very enthusiastic. It just carried a fantastic demonstration and is continuing to publish and sell a newsletter. Other actions are in the works. All in all, the group has overall a good atmosphere of free democratic discussion (e.g. little or no red-baiting).

Thus the Ottawa group remains a very successful and positive experience, both for women in Ottawa and for Women's Liberation work everywhere.

---